



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

OPERATORS OF CHINESE RESTAURANTS IN NEW YORK CHARGED WITH MONEY LAUNDERING AND HARBORING ILLEGAL ALIENS

-- Bank Accounts, Properties, and Vehicles Targeted for Forfeiture --

ALBANY, N.Y. -- Glenn T. Suddaby, United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York, and Jack McQuade, Resident Agent-in-Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for Albany, today announced the arrest of 5 people pursuant to two separate indictments charging them with Conspiracy to Harbor Illegal Aliens and Induce Illegal Aliens to Reside in the United States, Illegally Employing Unauthorized Aliens, and Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering, and the arrest of 3 men pursuant to criminal complaints charging them with Transporting Illegal Aliens.

REN AI LI, 29 and XIAO LE LI, 27, of Schodack, New York were charged in one indictment and KUN FUK CHENG, 40, of Albany, New York; JIN RONG CHENG, 40, of Albany, New York; and HUI GUO, 36, of Lake Katrine, New York, were charged in a second indictment with one count of Conspiracy to Harbor Illegal Aliens and Induce Illegal Aliens to Reside in the United States, in violation of Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(v)(I); Illegally Employing Unauthorized Aliens, in violation of Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(3)(A) and Title, 18, United States Code, Section 2; and Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1956(h).

The indictments also contain forfeiture allegations relating to more than 40 bank accounts which are alleged to contain the illegal proceeds of the charged crimes; as well as vehicles (some of which were allegedly used during the commission of the offenses); and parcels of real property allegedly purchased with the same illegal proceeds, and used in some instances during the commission of the charged crimes.

According to the indictments, from January 1999 through November 17, 2004, the defendants, all operators of various Chinese buffet restaurants in Albany, Schenectady, Saratoga, Columbia, and Dutchess Counties, used illegal aliens of Chinese and Mexican nationality as workers in their restaurants and laundered proceeds from the operation of those restaurants.

Specifically, the indictment alleges that REN AI LI, XIAO LE LI, KUN FUK CHENG, JIN RONG CHENG, and HUI GUO housed the illegal aliens in houses or residences they owned or rented; caused others to transport the workers between residences and the restaurants; and used others to monitor the workers in the residences. By doing so, they concealed, harbored, and shielded the aliens from detection and induced the aliens to live in the United States.

The indictments also allege that REN AI LI, XIAO LE LI, KUN FUK CHENG, JIN RONG CHENG, and HUI GUO conspired to commit money laundering. Specifically, the indictments allege that the defendants deposited illegal proceeds from the operation of the restaurants -- where the illegal aliens worked more than forty hours each week for less than minimum wage -- in nominee bank accounts opened in the names of employees and family members.

According to the indictments, the purpose of the nominee accounts was to conceal the source and true ownership of the proceeds generated from the operation of the restaurants. The indictments further allege that REN AI LI, XIAO LE LI, KUN FUK CHENG, JIN RONG CHENG, and HUI GUO used the accounts to pay for business and personal expenses as well as for the acquisition of other assets.

According to the indictments, the following total amounts were deposited into nominee accounts for personal expenses and investments: approximately \$900,000 for REN AI LI and XIAO LE LI and approximately \$800,000 for KUN FUK CHENG, JIN RONG CHENG, and HUI GUO.

If convicted, REN AI LI, XIAO LE LI, KUN FUK CHENG, JIN RONG CHENG, and HUI GUO each face a maximum potential penalty of ten years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine for the Conspiracy to Harbor Illegal Aliens and Induce Illegal Aliens to Reside in the United States charge; five years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine for the Illegally Employing Unauthorized Aliens charge; and twenty years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine for the Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering charge.

REN HUA LI, 27, of Green port, New York (REN AI LI's brother); DE GUI TIAN, 28, of Greenport, New York; and GEE YUK YEUNG, 32, of Troy, New York were each charged in criminal complaints with Transporting Illegal Aliens, in violation of Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii).

According to the criminal complaints, REN HUA LI, DE GUI TIAN, and GEE YUK YEUNG all transported illegal aliens between residences controlled by the operators of the Chinese buffets and the restaurants. If convicted, each faces a maximum potential penalty of five years imprisonment and/or a \$250,000 fine

U.S. Attorney Glenn T. Suddaby noted the extraordinary cooperation demonstrated by the local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies that worked together for months on the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation; the New York State Police; the U. S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division; the Colonie Police Department; the East Greenbush Police Department; the Schenectady Police Department; the Rensselaer County District Attorney's Office; the Schodack Police Department; the Hudson Police Department; the Troy Police Department; the Ulster County Police Department; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. U.S. Customs and Border Protection also assisted with the investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of New York. The Indictments and the complaints contain mere accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

#ICE#

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.